

WHAT TODDY HEARD

By Minna Thomas Antrim



I Have Had Several Attacks of Pup-Love; But I Loved Nellie



If Ever a Dog Was a Lady, That Dog Was Nellie

WHY I was called by such a nonsensical name I never knew until my master took me out to "The Willows," Miss Kathryne's country home, one day last summer.

"The darling! What is his name?" she asked, smoothing my coat and patting me on the head with her soft hand.

"Toddy," laughed Mr. Ned.

"Toddy! Toddy! How perfectly ridiculous! Has he a fondness for stim—stim—" Strange that I forget that word; my memory must be failing me.

"No, he's a sober old fellow. When he was a pup he staggered so absurdly that the Commodore christened him 'Toddy,' and like a burr the name has stuck ever since. Hasn't it, old chap?" He snapped his fingers to attract my notice.

Just to show that I had dog-sense, which I consider far greater than horse-sense, I staggered like a drunken man across the wide porch. They all laughed like mad. Between ourselves—Mr. Ned taught me this trick long ago.

When he snaps his fingers three times it's up to me to play "Toddy."

My life has been a quiet one, considering. I was born to the purple, at least that is what I heard the master of the Radner Hunt say one day. He ought to know. I didn't know what he meant exactly; but I suppose it was that my pedigree was not to be sneezed at. It is not, thank Heaven!

My first master was "The Commodore," Mr. Ned's guardian, and although he swore both roundly and squarely at me for my unsteady legs, he always made up for it. Bless him! He gave me, when I was a year old, to Mr. Ned, and for that I forgave him all, even for that awful licking. He gave me a trouncing that was no joke for stealing a soup-bone that Towser, a common creature belonging to a stable man, made off with. A soup-bone! O! Shades of my ancestors! A soup-bone!

Mr. Ned and I became chums from the first. Where he goes I go, or they do without us.

It is just this way: Mr. Ned needs me as much as I do him, so I always feel that neither is under compliment to the other. Blood tells, and our forebears, though different as to the number of legs, were among the bravest patriots who built and protected this country when it was only a pup—a helpless infant, I should say.

Mr. Ned boards and beds me. In return, I am his confidant-in-chief.

"Tod," he said one night about six months ago, fairly strangling me with his greeting—"Tod, old fellow, I've met your future mistress, and she's—she's a dream. She shall be my wife, or there'll be no wife for me. We two shall face life together if she says no. See, old man?"

I do not speak English; but I have a language which Mr. Ned understands perfectly. He calls it "doggerel." I made no answer to his lover's nonsense.

"For shame! You are jealous! Why, can't you see, you foolish old dull-head, the fine thing it will be to be owned by the loveliest lady in the land?"

He was looking at me with such a happy light in his big brown eyes that although I felt already

the power of the woman who comes between, I gave a yawn of joy, which, though badly done, satisfied my young master, who was thinking of—her, not me.

As he slept the next morning, I watched him from my bed—always moved up close to his. I have seen many handsome men, but none so all-round splendid as Mr. Ned. His pedigree shows in every line of his clean-cut face, and his figure is great. Although he has one of the finest, Mr. Ned doesn't care much for pedigrees. Once I heard him say to Dr. Dick, his chum (after me): "Pedigree be hanged; it is red blood, not blue, that has made the American man." Dr. Dick dotes on pedigree. I agree with him, for blue blood—well, blue ribbon you will notice I have won; but that of course all has been printed long ago.

As I watched Mr. Ned sleep that morning, a sharp knock came, then in walked Dr. Dick.

I never liked the doctor, although Mr. Ned did. I never trusted him. Mr. Ned, as usual, scolded me for my jealousy. He was wrong. The objection was my own. I never permitted Dr. Dick to touch me, for I well remembered the time he had kicked me three times on my side, so that for a week I could not sleep for the pain. I happened to get in his way as he was stepping into an automobile. I tried to get away; but he—oh, well. Mr. Ned did not see this cowardly act. I wish he had; but I have not forgotten it, and never will.

This morning I hated him especially. While my master put on his light summer suit—the one he usually asked if I thought he "would do" in—he talked about Miss Kathryne Curtis.

"She's not for you, Neddy, my boy," Dr. Dick said. There was something queer in his voice. Mr. Ned turned quickly.

"Only she can settle that to my satisfaction," he flashed, drawing in his lip in a way that I knew meant "Watch out!"

"I don't know about that," answered the doctor; "the old man, her father, looks with a forbidding eye upon fellows who lack the coin. You're poor, you know, Sir Ned, although uncommonly handsome."

There was a badly hidden jibe in his tone that nettled even me.

"We'll drop the subject," Mr. Ned spoke quietly;

but he looked furious. Drop it they did. Then we all went out. We left the man at the corner. After that morning Dr. Dick stopped coming to our apartment. I was happy.

"You were right, old fellow—he's yellow," Mr. Ned confided to me about a month later. He was tearing Dr. Dick's photograph into little pieces.

I looked sharply into my master's white face, he down into mine. For fully twenty seconds we sat staring at each other.

"Well, you want to know all about things, and you shall," he said, "for you know her; she loves you dearly, happy Toddy! Would I was as certain!"

He meant Miss Kathryne. He was right. I knew her, and I knew what he did not, that she loved him also, my dear young master! Did she not whisper it to me? Of course she did! Alas! she put me on my honor not to tell. *Noblesse oblige*—gentlemen never betray the confidence of a woman.

I am true to my class. So I merely pounded the floor six times with my emotional indicator (tail, in common English).

Mr. Ned smiled. "You love her also," he said, stroking my back gently. "I'm not jealous of you, Toddy. I suspect Dr. Dick has made some sort of trouble. She has not answered my letters. Something is wrong."

There was a little tremor in his voice that deeply pained me. For a moment I was stumped. What to do to comfort him I could not think, so I simply put my right paw into his hand. It was all I could do. He understood.

"You mean we have each other; that—"

Suddenly his voice broke oddly; then taking me up beside him on our wide leather couch, he laid his head upon my side, and was unusually still.

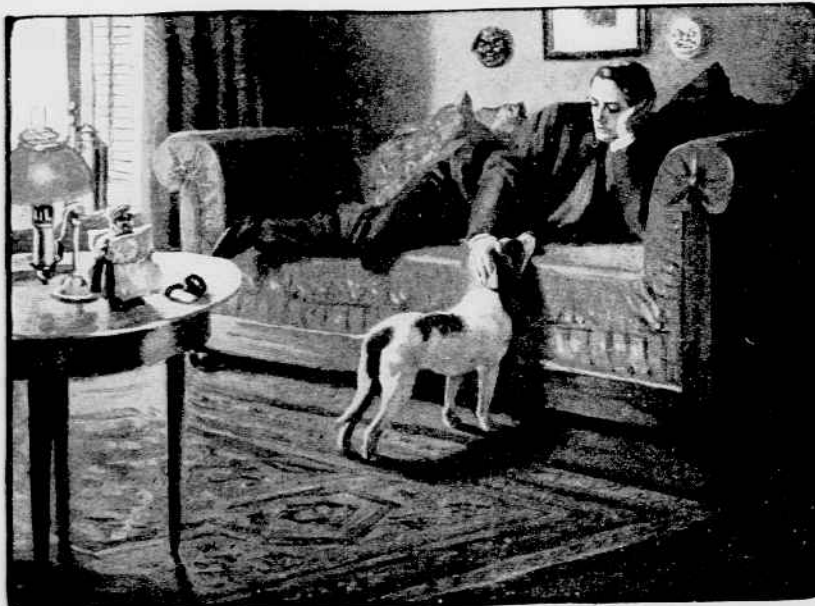
In a few moments, however, Mr. Ned jumped up and pushed me away, almost roughly.

"We'll see if we, you and I, Tod, cannot triumph over our enemies. Now, be still; I must write a letter," he said. Thought is not noisy, so while Mr. Ned wrote sheet after sheet I thought.

It seemed selfish that my master's trouble should not have occupied all my thoughts; but I am truthful, and must say that my mind also went back to the time when I too was young, and had to face a lonely future. Dogs' love is strong love. We fritter away no time in silly pretense. Of course, we have our passing fancies—all of us. If "men will be men," so also dogs will be dogs; but when we love, we love faithfully and well—history proves this.

She—my love was named Nellie—she was born at the Chestnut Hill Kennels, and if ever a dog was a lady, that dog was Nellie. Her coat was black satin, and around her neck, which was as slender and lovely in its way as Miss Kathryne's own, was a collar of white, as soft to the touch as velvet.

I have had several attacks of pup-love; but I loved Nellie. After meeting her twice, I knew that. She had adorers galore, but to none of us gave she one particle of encouragement. In spite of her tiny stature, Nellie had a manner that would not have shamed a Miss Kathryne. I called upon her



"You Know She Loves You Dearly, Happy Toddy," He Said